

Guidelines for *Southern Topics*

The *Southern Topics* has a very long history, dating back to its predecessor - before there were regions - called *Weather Bureau Topics*. The publication has always been a good way for us to communicate regularly with our offices, with others in the NWS and NOAA, and with outside agencies as well. The *Topics* serves to record important accomplishments and milestones related to southern Region operations and services.

SSD is responsible for final editing of *Topics*, and all of the SRH divisions do a good job of providing timely and useful information each month. Much of what is included originates at the field offices, but let's not forget the importance of including items which describe what the SRH staff is up to as well, as we strive to support the local offices.

The majority of readers (and our primary audience) are Southern Region employees, but realize *Topics* is also available on-line to other NWS regions, NWSH, other NOAA offices, and outside agencies and universities. We post *Topics* to the SR Web page.

Following are a few ideas which will help to streamline the process of assembling and editing the *Topics* each month. If you strongly disagree with any of the suggestions, please let me know, but otherwise let's use these as guidelines for consistency.

- Keep the primary audience in mind and ask yourself, is this something they need to know, or know about? Also keep the monthly publication cycle in mind and take care not to refer to something that "will happen" at some date **before** the *Topics* are posted.
- Keep items brief and to the point. Use short paragraphs, but don't lengthen the article by separating it into unnecessary one- or two-sentence paragraphs. If a lengthy item (half a page or more) is otherwise appropriate for *Topics*, then include it as an attachment (or technical attachment), linked to a short introductory item inside the *Topics*.
- Proofread with an eye to eliminating unnecessary words such as "that," or excessive use of adjectives. Aim for brevity wherever possible.
- Proofread carefully (in addition to using a spell-checker), and follow conventional rules of grammar and punctuation.
- Generally, the *Topics* should communicate information, not instruction; "news," not "policy." For example, an information item including a reminder of an important response date or deadline is appropriate, but detailed instructions on how or when something is to be done are more appropriately handled by a memo, email or supplement.

- If you *must* use acronyms and initialisms, then define them when first used. Exceptions are those which we can assume are well known to most readers (NOAA, NWS, SRH, AFOS, AWIPS, WFO, RFC, NWSO, etc.). Avoid overuse in any case. Remember many readers may not be as familiar with acronyms as we are at the NWS. This applies particularly to other organizations or agencies such as COE, TVA, AMS, FSL, NSSL, etc.
- Spell out office names (Morristown, Tennessee; not MRX TN). States can probably be omitted in most cases; surely everyone knows New Orleans is in Louisiana, right? Use WFO if speaking generically. The initialism RFC is recognizable, but using West Gulf RFC prior to the first use of WGRFC (for example) will probably be helpful for some readers.
- In reference to office names, use the conventional name of the office, not its new location. For example, WFO Atlanta not WFO Peachtree City. Use the actual location of the office only when it serves a purpose.
- When forwarding items to Leslie, please adhere to the following formatting guide:
 - ▶ The font used for *Topics* is *Times New Roman*.
 - ▶ Set all margins for 1 inch - top, bottom, left, and right.
 - ▶ Type each section heading in all caps followed by a period and four spaces. Bold all of this *including the period*.

Example:

NEW MIC AT WFO MIAMI. Rusty Pfof, previously...